

10/5712651 **1AP20 Rec'd PCT/PTO 09 MAR 2006****BELT BUCKLE FOR HOLDING VALUABLES****BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

5 This invention relates to a belt buckle which holds valuables, such as money and/or credit cards and which includes a frame for receiving the valuables and elements for fastening the belt to the buckle.

10 For storing cash and/or credit cards on a person, apart from the traditional purses and wallets, numerous other devices have been known which have been developed partly for security reasons and partly for reasons of comfort. A protection against pickpockets is still a present-day problem; for this reason one part of the various devices for storing valuables are provided in every-day apparel at locations which are hidden or accessible only with difficulty. Examples are hidden pockets, hollowed shoe soles, money belts provided with Zip-fasteners and
15 the like. Storing valuables in such hidden locations, however, involve obvious disadvantages: the owner too, has a difficult access to the valuables; this, for example, leads to inconveniences during shopping. Further, the stuffed hidden pockets or the like often result in bulging, thus revealing the location of the valuables.

20 In many instances the primary purpose is not so much a protection against thieves, but to carry the valuables as comfortably and conveniently as possible. For many physical activities it is inconvenient to carry a wallet or purse in a separate bag or case. This problem is partially eliminated by various storage devices worn around the neck, pouch belts or pouches attachable to belts.

25 Solutions have been developed which combine the advantages noted above. Thus, United States Patent No. 5,622,301 discloses a hidden valuables holder attachable to a belt. The holder comprises a flat storage part and strips attached to the storage part and terminating in a loop. The size of the loops is sufficient to thread therethrough a usual belt for slacks or skirts. The strips are

sufficiently long to allow the valuables holder, suspended from the belt, to be worn outside or inside the slacks or skirts.

United States Patent No. 4,437,598 discloses a valuables holder which is formed in the belt buckle proper and thus ensures total secrecy. Accordingly, a cavity is formed in the belt buckle, and money may be laterally introduced into or removed from the cavity. For this operation, however, the belt has to be opened which, on the one hand, is inconvenient, and, on the other hand, may occasionally be disconcerting. It is a further drawback of this solution that the stored valuables cannot be removed along a planar surface; even their storage occurs along an arcuate surface and thus the device is not adapted to store relatively rigid articles, such as credit cards, passes or identity cards. It is also a disadvantage that for grasping the valuables, particularly money, only an extremely small space is available laterally between the buckle and the belt and therefore its use is uncertain and circumstantial.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore an object of the invention to provide an improved belt buckle which avoids the earlier-described disadvantages and which ensures an easy and reliable handling.

This object and others to become apparent as the specification progresses, are accomplished by the invention, according to which, briefly stated, the belt buckle for holding valuables includes a frame, a belt-fastening arrangement attached to the frame and a cavity defined within the frame. The cavity constitutes a compartment bounded by planar surfaces and dimensioned for accommodating at least one credit card. The compartment has a top opening for introducing and removing the valuables. The top opening is expediently provided with a closure element and/or a card-immobilizing element.

In an expedient embodiment the frame has a money or card holding insert which fits into the compartment. The insert may be, for example, a compartmented plastic holder or an openable and closable flat box which is securable in the

compartment, for example, by providing the insert and the frame with mutually engageable snap-in closure members.

In case the belt buckle is significantly thicker than usual, the frame may be bilaterally provided with belt-guiding extensions.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the invention, viewed from the rear.

Figure 2 is a perspective view of another preferred embodiment of the invention, viewed from the front.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of a component of the embodiment shown in Figure 2.

Figure 4 is a sectional view of the embodiment shown in Figure 2.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figure 1 shows a preferred embodiment of the invention from the rear. A belt buckle 1 is adjoined by a belt 2 held in place by a belt fastening element 4 secured to a frame 3. Further known belt fastening elements 5 and 6 are formed on the rear side of the frame 3. The frame 3 defines an inner compartment 7 having an introducing/removing opening 8 formed in the rear wall 3a of the frame 3 by a rounded recess 9 provided in the rear wall 3a along its upper edge. The opening 8 may have a conventional closure, such as a lid. The compartment 7 proper is a cavity bounded by planar surfaces to ensure that a relatively rigid article, such as a credit card is not in a bent state either during introduction, or storage or removal. The opening 8 is disposed at the top of the compartment partly for this reason, and partly to ensure the most convenient access.

Figure 2 illustrates another preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in perspective, as seen from the front (in a slightly distorted representation for the sake of better demonstration). The belt buckle 1' is provided with an insert 10 and a compartment 7' configured to accommodate the insert 10. For this purpose, the

insert 10 is introduced into the compartment 7' as indicated by the arrow A. If needed, on either side of the belt buckle 1' a guiding extension 11 may be provided for guiding and positioning the belt 2 immediately adjacent the belt buckle 1'. The permanently fixed end of the belt 2 is threaded through an opening 12 formed on one side of the belt buckle 1', while on the other side of the belt buckle 1' an opening 13 is situated for introducing the free end of the belt 2 into the belt buckle 1' as indicated by the arrow B, to attach the belt 2 with the aid of holes 14 (only one shown) in a known manner.

Also referring to Figure 3, the insert 10 structured for storing valuables, such as credit cards or money, is an openable and closable box, formed by a lid 15, a rear panel 16 and a closure panel 17. The lid 15 joins the rear panel 16 at a right angle along one edge, while an extension 18 is formed along an opposite edge of the lid 15. By means of the extension 18, which projects from the frame 3', the insert 10 may be easily lifted out of the belt buckle 1', as shown in Figure 2. The extension 18 is provided with a closing element 19 which may be snapped on the frame 3'. The closure panel 17 is secured by a live hinge 20 to the bottom edge of the rear panel 16. As an alternative, the live hinge may be positioned laterally, in which case the closure panel 17 opens sideways. The solution illustrated, however, is particularly advantageous in that the valuables cannot slip out of the frame 3' upon removal of the insert 10. The valuables may be easily removed from, or introduced into the insert 10 after opening the closure panel 17.

Figure 4 illustrates the position of the insert 10 within the frame 3'. The rear panel 16 is in contact with the rear wall of the compartment 7' of the frame 3', that is, the closure panel 17 assumes its position in the front part of the compartment 7'. The lid 15 obturates the top opening 8 of the compartment 7', and the extension 18 projects over the frontal side of the frame 3'.

While in the embodiment shown in Figures 2-4 the insert is designed as a box, it may have other configurations, such as a compartmented plastic holder.

Both described embodiments ensure for the owner a convenient and easy access to the stored valuables which, at the same time, remain hidden to others.

It will be understood that the above description of the present invention is susceptible to various modifications, changes and adaptations, and the same are intended to be comprehended within the meaning and range of equivalents of the appended claims.